



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 21, 2003

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Affairs Officer
610 N.W. Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
(210) 384-7452

EL PASO MAN SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR ALIEN SMUGGLING

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that 48-year-old Kenneth Jack Pekel, was sentenced to 51 months in federal prison for alien smuggling. On June 17, 2003, a federal jury in Pecos, Texas, convicted Pekel of six counts of alien smuggling.

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton stated, "This investigation and it's outcome reflects the commitment of the U.S. Attorney's Office to aggressively prosecute alien smuggling cases - especially when the lives of others are placed in jeopardy."

On March 10, 2003, Pekel was arrested while attempting to smuggle twenty-one illegal aliens past the U.S. Border Patrol Checkpoint at Sierra Blanca, Texas. The illegal immigrants were being transported from El Paso to Dallas, Texas.

Evidence presented at trial revealed that all twenty-one of the illegal immigrants were found inside a large wooden crate which was tightly wrapped with a tarp and strapped to a flat-bed trailer. There was no fresh air or ventilation in the crate, nor was food or water available. They were locked inside the crate with no way to escape.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Border Patrol Anti Smuggling Unit and was prosecuted for the government by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gary Tromblay and Dwight Goains.

#####